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General debate on national experience in population matters: fertility, reproductive health and development

Statement submitted by German Foundation for World Population, Vaestoliitto and World Population Foundation, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement*

1. The above-signed NGOs working in promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights worldwide, welcome the theme "Fertility, Reproductive Health and Development" of the 44th Session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development.

2. Breaking through the cycle of poverty begins with the freedom of choice. People have the right to the highest attainable standard of sexual and reproductive health regardless their sex, age, religion or culture. Sexual and reproductive rights should be respected. We need to put young people, women and vulnerable groups such as the disabled and/or chronically ill first. The basis of sustainable development is when they can decide freely about their sexuality, how many children they want and when, and know how to have safe sex.

3. Two hundred and fifteen million women in developing countries want to use contraceptives, but cannot access them.[1] This unmet need will only increase. If women can access contraceptives and family planning services, they choose to have lesser children which allows themselves and their children to live healthy lives.[2] Ensuring the access to contraceptives is cost effective and can prevent almost a third of all maternal deaths.[3]

4. More than half of the world population is under the age of 24. These young people and adolescents and their sexual and reproductive health and rights are neglected the most. As they are entering their sexual and reproductive lives, they are lacking the necessary information and education to make informed and healthy choices about their sexuality. They are unable to access youth friendly sexual and reproductive health services and contraceptives. Comprehensive sexuality and the promotion of freedom of choice contributes to improved health of young people.[4]

5. About 13 per cent of maternal deaths are due to unsafe abortions. These are 70,000 unnecessary deaths each year. We cannot talk about reducing maternal mortality and achieving the MDGs without acknowledging this. Women and young women need to have access to safe abortion services, and need to have access to family planning information and services and high-quality post-abortion care.

6. One in three of all women have experienced a form of sexual and gender-based violence. Involving men in countering this violence is crucial to end it. Gender equality is a critical factor for the attainment of sustainable development, the elimination of poverty, HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive rights.

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* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

[1] Singh, S., Darroch, J. E., Ashford, L. S., Vlassoff, M., 2009. Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Family Planning and Maternal and Newborn Health. Washington/New York: Guttmacher/UNFPA.

[2] Ronsmans C. and Campbell O. 1998. "Short birth intervals don't kill women: evidence from Matlab, Bangladesh." Studies in Family Planning 29: 282-90 en WHO. 2005. World Health Report 2005. Geneva: WHO.

[3] United Nations Department of Public Information — DPI/2650 E/Rev.1 — September 2010 We Can End Poverty 2015 Fact Sheet: http://www.unclef.com/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/MDG_FS_5_EN_new.pdf.

[4] Kirby, D. The impact of Abstinence and Comprehensive Sex and STD/HIV Education Programs on Adolescent Sexual Behavior. Sexuality Research & Social Policy 2008: 5(3): 18-27.

7. The funding gap in 2010 for family planning and reproductive health was estimated to more than 6.8 billion US dollars. In order to meet the MDGs and the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action another 54.8 billion US dollars must be mobilized.[5] The funding for prevention of unwanted pregnancy by comprehensive sexuality education and the provision of family planning services has decreased 34 per cent since 2000.[6]

Actions required

8. Family planning: strengthen the right of adolescent and adult men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of contraception and family planning of their choice, including male and female condoms. Promote gender-based education for adolescent and adult men on fertility issues, disease prevention, available health-care services and reproductive rights so that they can be more engaged in ensuring healthy lives for their partners and children.

9. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of young people: ensure young people's access to sexual and reproductive health information, education and care, contraceptive and family planning services and commodities, including male and female condoms. Safeguard the right of adolescents to privacy, confidentiality, respect and informed consent.

10. Comprehensive sexuality education: provide young people with comprehensive education from a human rights-based perspective on human sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and on how to deal positively and responsibly with their sexuality.

11. Safe abortion: ensure that women, especially those who are most vulnerable, have access in their communities to the full range of reproductive health care in accordance with their human rights, including effective and affordable methods of contraception, post-abortion care, and safe abortion services.

12. Gender equality: empower young people and women to demand their rights related to gender equality; rights for women and men to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and reproduction, free of coercion, discrimination and violence.

13. Youth participation: meaningfully involve young people in the design, implementation and evaluation of all sexual and reproductive health policies and programmes.

14. Implementation and funding: comprehensive sexuality education and achieving universal access to reproductive health and family planning services and supplies is fundamental to achieving the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Millennium Development Goals. We all need to scale up efforts and funding to achieve these goals and we need accessible, transparent and effective implementation monitoring and accountability mechanisms at the national and international levels.

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[5] UNFPA/NIDI Resource Flows Project Database, UN CPD 2009 report "The Flow of Financial Resource for Assisting in the Implementation of the PoA ICPD".

[6] Euromapping 2009 — DSW, EPF, EuroNgos.

15. ICPD+20: participation of civil society in the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action and the Key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development up to 2014 and beyond, is crucial to ensure their full achievement. Civil society, including young people, should therefore be enabled to participate fully in all activities set out in Resolution A/RES/65/234 on Follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014.